

---May 1981

NFAC Planning, Management, and Evaluation Staff

Management Report

(Public Release of NFAC Unclassified Publications)

Attention: Director, National Foreign Assessment Center

Subject

It is NFAC policy to release unclassified publications that are likely to be of interest to academia, the business community, and the general public. The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence has requested that this policy be reviewed; the Deputy Director of NFAC asked PMES to study the issue and prepare a report that would form the basis for making recommendations to the DDCI.

The specific question is whether to continue to make unclassified NFAC publications available to the public. Present practice includes the release of some reports that are analytic, judgmental, or predictive in nature, and a larger number that are compilations of facts or statistics. (As will become apparent, an attendant issue is whether to produce such analytic reports in unclassified form in the first place, since once produced they are vulnerable to release through FOIA channels whether publicly disseminated or not.) A more basic issue, only touched on in this study, is the extent to which NFAC should be involved in doing unclassified research.

Methodology

PMES interviewed a number of people who produce, disseminate, or are otherwise involved with unclassified reports. In addition, because the unclassified report program has been examined several times in the past, there is a body of literature on the subject--mainly in the form of informal memoranda and staff studies. A bibliography of the most informative studies is at Annex A. Lists of the NFAC publications released (not including typescript memoranda) and of subscribers to them through commercial (non-Agency governmental) distribution services are included at Annexes B and C.

No attempt was made to query consumers of NFAC unclassified reports, either inside or outside the government.

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Unclassified Research and Publication

Much of the work done by NFAC--particularly by the Offices of Central Reference and Economic Research--involves the accumulation and analysis of data from open sources available to the general public. Publications that result from analysis of these data are generally unclassified. Such publications, like classified publications, are produced in the first instance for consumers within the government; their release to the public is a byproduct made possible because the cost is small.

If the information used in a report is unclassified, there is no basis in law for assigning a classification, unless the release of the report would adversely affect the national security. The issue of public release thus becomes a practical as well as a philosophical matter; unless CIA is offered a broader exemption under FOIA to protect its research, there is no legal basis to withhold that portion of its work that is unclassified, even though the Agency need not offer it voluntarily.

The bulk of NFAC's unclassified publications--other than maps and charts--are the result of biographic and economic research. OCR's wall charts of foreign government and party structures and directories of foreign officials are developed from unclassified data. OER is the office most affected, producing most of NFAC's analytic public releases, as well as a number of statistical compilations. Most of the economic data on industrial nations and non-Communist LDCs, as well as on international trade, investment, and financial flows, comes from open sources. During the period 1 April 1979 to 30 March 1980, a substantial portion of OER's production--including 12 of the 29 Research Papers and many of the serial articles and typescripts--was published in unclassified form.*

According to the Director of Economic Research, OER's charter for economic analysis on a global basis requires it to do both classified and unclassified research. "In economics, classified information does not play a dominant role, and where it does, it can be hidden." For that reason, he believes there is no serious source degradation involved in putting out some reports in an unclassified rather than a classified version. "We publish reports in an unclassified form because they are useful to the government that way; we disseminate them to the public because the marginal cost is small." Their reference value is appreciated by outsiders. OER's policy is that building block research should be unclassified unless there is good reason to the contrary. The Director also believes that OER needs unclassified research and publications as a basis for communicating outside the Intelligence Community: "We have

*From the Senior Review Panel Evaluation of NFAC Production, 1 April 1979-30 March 1980, Phase II.

little choice but to do unclassified work; otherwise we would become totally ingrown."

The Senior Review Panel's study of NFAC production gave high marks to OER for combining publicly available source material with classified or proprietary information in papers which were "well pointed up" for use by high-level policymakers. The SRP noted the unique role OER plays in the economic and energy policy communities. "It provides, in effect, a general purpose research and information staff for the US Government, with a greater breadth of coverage and depth of macro and microeconomic information than any other single US Agency." If that is an appropriate role for OER, unclassified research and publication assume considerable importance.

The Offices of Political Analysis, Scientific and Weapons Research, and Strategic Research are far less involved in unclassified publication. A few unclassified reports on political, military, and scientific research have been published—notably the studies on the dollar cost comparison of Soviet and US defense activities and on international terrorism—but most such research does not lend itself to unclassified publication.

The Office of Geographic and Societal Research, in addition to its substantial output of unclassified maps and atlases, publishes annually the unclassified National Basic Intelligence Factbook. OGSR also has published unclassified studies on food, population, and environmental issues.

Although unclassified publications are produced in the first instance for analysts and policymakers in government—not for the public—there is a public relations aspect to the release, if not the production, of such publications. This is particularly true of the publications that began as classified reports but were subsequently "sanitized" to permit dissemination outside the intelligence and policy communities. In the recent past, it has been the CIA's position that making available some of its unclassified research to the general public is in the interests of both the Agency and the public. Previous Administrations have encouraged such an attitude by requesting sanitized versions of some classified reports, and by their general support of more openness in government. Both the Soviet oil and the dollar cost comparison papers were sanitized and released as a result of Presidential requests.

Background of Public Release

Public release of unclassified CIA publications—some attributed to CIA, some not—goes back more than 20 years. The Office of Research and Reports, the office then responsible for military and economic analysis, released a few reports a year in the late 1950s and the 1960s. In addition, CIA's map library began in the 1960s to release its general survey maps and some

atlases through the Government Printing Office. At about the same time, other basic reference materials (such as the National Basic Intelligence Factbook and The Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments) and a few building block studies, principally on the Soviet, East European, and Chinese economies, began to be disseminated. CIA research--frequently with attribution--also became public through its use and release in Congressional committee reports.

In 1972, as a way to increase public understanding of the role of intelligence (and thereby counter some of the adverse publicity about the CIA), the decision was made to undertake more open and systematic dissemination of unclassified reports. Contracts with external distributors, such as the Library of Congress, enabled the Agency to reach a wide readership. Over the following years, analytical reports, such as Prospects for Soviet Oil Production and International and Transnational Terrorism, were added to the categories of publications released to the general public. Not all of these were unclassified in their original form; some were sanitized versions of classified reports. In 1972, 27 NFAC publications were approved for release; in 1978, as a result of Admiral Turner's policy of encouraging public release, the figure approached 150.* The bulk of the releases were building block studies that did not assess the future to any great extent.

The proposal to release an unclassified publication is usually made by the director of the office that produced the report. Approval is decided on a case-by-case basis by the Deputy Director of NFAC (except for some periodic publications that have standing approval). Where foreign policy sensitivity is a consideration, NFAC must coordinate with the State Department and the NSC staff before approving release. These rules and procedures are specified in an NFAC notice (see Annex D).

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[REDACTED] The DDI's Academic Coordinator also began to disseminate unclassified reports in the 1960s to selected academicians throughout the country, a practice which continues with the NFAC Coordinator for Academic Relations.

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*Does not include maps or informal typescript memoranda.

[Redacted]

DOCEX. In early 1972 the CIA began to release selected studies through the Document Expediting Project (DOCEX) of the Library of Congress. DOCEX is a centralized acquisition and distribution service for many US Government publications; distribution is by subscription only--no single issues are available.* In 1972, DOCEX had a standing requirement for 165 copies of each NFAC publication released; the present requirement is 625 copies. (One CIA "best seller," CIA Publications Released to the Public, was requested in 800 copies.) The Agency's agreement with DOCEX calls for the 625 copies to be provided free of charge. DOCEX will be charged overrun costs (additional time, paper, and handling) for any copies over the base number.

The DOCEX channel was originally selected because it provided services to a cross section of academic libraries throughout the United States. The current list of subscribers to CIA documents is much larger and includes many business, academic, and media organizations in addition to the 130 participating libraries. A subscription service to all CIA documents costs \$225 a year; among the subscribers: 186 foreign government, academic, and business organizations (including the Soviet Embassy and OPEC), 17 US media subscribers (including the AP, Washington Post, New York Times, and Wall Street Journal), and a number of US business organizations. A current list of subscribers is at annex.**

NTIS. Since January 1979, NFAC publications may also be obtained by specific series, subject, or individual publication from the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) of the Department of Commerce. NTIS is a clearinghouse for US and foreign government-sponsored research, development, and engineering reports and other reports (business, economic, scientific, social) prepared by Federal and local government agencies. All NFAC products distributed by DOCEX are also sent to NTIS.

There is no single list of subscribers to CIA publications through NTIS. Rather there are various subscription services, as well as single-publication purchases. At present NTIS requests anywhere from 35 to 310 copies of NFAC publications. NTIS is charged overrun costs by the Agency for any copies over 15.

*Single photocopies can be obtained--at some expense--from the Photoduplication Service of the Library of Congress, which keeps a microfiche and a hard copy of every document distributed by DOCEX; numerous inquiries are handled on an individual basis by this service.

**Reflects those customers who are interested in CIA reports only; others, including at least 130 libraries, subscribe to the full range of DOCEX publications.

Recipients include foreign and domestic businesses and the media.

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GPO. The Government Printing Office offers for sale to the public CIA maps, atlases, and a few "best sellers," such as the National Basic Intelligence Factbook.

FDLP. In 1977, the DCI approved CIA participation in the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), which creates, by law, a class of libraries in the US in which government documents are deposited for the use of the public. Under this program, two copies--usually in microform--of every unclassified CIA publication are furnished to the GPO, which makes distribution to depository libraries.* About 900 such libraries now receive Agency publications.

Department of Commerce, Bureau of East-West Trade. Selected unclassified NFAC economic reports are sent to the Bureau of East-West Trade for distribution to the US business community. Approximately 100 copies of each report are disseminated this way.

CIA Dissemination. In addition to the external channels described above, the CIA makes some direct distribution. The Office of Public Affairs distributes anywhere from 25 to 400 copies of NFAC unclassified reports, mostly to the media. Public Affairs has a media mailing list of about 80 to whom it sends a monthly summary of CIA publications available to the public (sample at Annex E). The Office of Public Affairs receives several thousand inquiries each year regarding unclassified CIA publications; a factsheet describing the commercial distribution outlets is sent out in response to such questions (see annex). Public Affairs may provide copies of unclassified Agency publications to segments of the public directly when it judges that a publication may have wide public interest or will contribute to public debate on critical issues.

As mentioned above, NFAC's Coordinator for Academic Relations sends selected unclassified CIA publications to 140 academicians, research organizations, and war colleges throughout the country. The original intent was to send the reports to noted scholars for their use and comment; although the list of recipients has grown over the years, it is purged regularly of those customers who no longer have an interest. The Coordinator takes the responsibility for ensuring that his distribution does not duplicate that of the production offices.

*If the publication contains graphics in which color plays an essential role, the Agency prints 900 hard copies for FDLP distribution.

NFAC production offices--particularly OER--distribute their unclassified products directly when they believe it is in their interest to do so. OER distributes copies of its unclassified reports to the academic community here and abroad under cover of a letter signed by the Director of OER; the number of copies varies from 225 to 600.

The Congressional Support Staff of the Office of Legislative Counsel sends 105 copies of most unclassified NFAC reports to selected Congressmen, principally members of the oversight committees. For some publications, such as A Dollar Cost Comparison of Soviet and US Defense Activities, Congressional demand is much higher. In addition, all members of both Houses of Congress are provided with the annual listing of unclassified publications available from CIA.

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_____ usually disseminates about 200 copies of NFAC unclassifieds to sources and potential sources. The previous DCI distributed NFAC publications--including the factsheet on how to obtain unclassified CIA publications--during speaking engagements. In addition, such reports are often made available to foreign intelligence services through liaison channels.

Number of Copies Printed

The number of copies of unclassified NFAC reports printed varies with the subject and the anticipated interest. The more narrowly focused ones receive a printing of between 1,700 and 2,000 copies; those of more general interest are printed in as many as 6,000 copies. A few publications, such as the terrorism and world energy papers, get even wider distribution. From distribution lists it appears that about as many copies are disseminated within the US Government as are disseminated to the public.* Some government recipients, however, such as the Bureau of East-West Trade of the Commerce Department, act as

*For example, one report that has always been a best seller is OER's annual review of the Soviet economy. The Soviet Economy in 1978-79 and Prospects for 1980, published in June 1980, was printed in 4,200 copies. The initial distribution of this report (1,700 copies were sent to Records Center in anticipation of supplemental distribution) was as follows. Sixty-eight copies were sent under cover of a blue note from D/OER to senior officials at NSC, CEA, OMB, State, Energy, Defense, Treasury, Commerce, Federal Reserve, and Agriculture. Bulk dissemination was made to NSA, DIA, Treasury, and State. DOCEX got 600 copies, NTIS 210, DCD 215, Congressional recipients 106, and OER 310 for transmittal to academics.

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_____ The Office of Public Affairs initially received 400 copies and later requested an additional 350 copies for use by the DCI.

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distribution points for the academic and business communities.

Attempts to avoid reprinting costs have sometimes resulted in printing larger stocks than have been necessary. NFAC now estimates more carefully. Many more copies are printed of unclassified documents than of classified publications. And the trend in recent years toward more unclassified publications with large press runs has been one factor affecting the rise in Agency publishing costs. Unclassified NFAC publication production as a percentage of total NFAC intelligence production, however, is quite small.

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According to the Printing and Photography Division of the Office of Logistics, the public distribution of unclassified NFAC publications has little impact on the costs or timeliness of printing production; P&PD is organized for high volume, fast throughput operation. The real costs involved are in setting up the initial press run--not in printing additional copies for public dissemination; printing 1,000 extra copies of a report requires about an hour's more press time, according to P&PD.

Arguments in Favor of Public Release

"The program does no harm, is not very costly, and is good public relations"--NFAC Coordinator for Academic Relations

Most arguments in favor of the public release of NFAC unclassified publications fall into one of two broad categories: enhancing the CIA's image/reputation and contributing to the public knowledge. A few more specific arguments fit neither category and, although of a lesser order, are listed separately. Where counter arguments have been made, they are presented also.

Public release enhances the Agency's image and reputation. One reason for undertaking the program of systematic public release in the early 1970s was to increase public understanding of the role of intelligence. Public release of NFAC reports has also been used to deflect public attention from "dirty tricks" and to help dispel the air of mystery that surrounds the Agency. In the words of a DCD officer, "Unclassified publications tend to normalize the Agency to a select public--i.e., to show that it has reasonable concerns about which it is capable of making informed and reasonable judgments."

According to the Director of Economic Research, unclassified publications "have spawned numerous invitations to address various opinion-forming groups concerned with international relations and, largely through press publicity, greatly increased public awareness of CIA's importance as a research organization. The benefits from this image building are unquantifiable, but probably large." He also believes that CIA

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classified assessments are better accepted because of the known quality of NFAC's unclassified research.

Even if one acknowledges the need to foster a more positive public image, however, it is difficult to demonstrate that the program of public release does that. As evidence that the program works, proponents cite feedback and heavy demand for CIA publications in DOCEX and NTIS. Others argue that release simply corroborates a person's prior convictions about the Agency: many readers already have a high opinion of the Agency's work, while others believe that release is politically motivated and represents an attempt to manipulate public opinion.

It contributes to informed debate on national issues. In this context, release of unclassified publications is seen as a public service, a return to the Congress and the taxpayers. The public benefits can be viewed as additives to those derived from NFAC's direct research support of the Executive Branch. In addition, the public is made aware of CIA as a research organization, can see how some of its tax dollars are spent, and, to some extent, how intelligence relates to national issues.

Policymakers also benefit from having the information and analysis available to the public, which in turn contributes to informed public debate. According to the Director of Economic Research, CIA unclassified reports which challenge the conventional wisdom have encouraged private sector analysts to re-examine their own assumptions and, in so doing, have generated fresh research on the outside.

The counter-argument holds that media interpretations of unclassified CIA research may actually confuse the debate on national issues. According to a 1979 DCD memo, when an Agency study is quoted by the news media, the impression is often conveyed that the Agency is either proposing a specific policy or taking a stand on a partisan issue. "This misreading of the facts tends to draw attention away from the real issues and sometimes transforms the public debate into an argument over the 'correctness' of what is perceived to be the Agency position. How much of the misrepresentation by the news media is due to ignorance of the Agency's role or to a deliberate distortion of the facts is unclear, but recent Agency studies...appear to have confused the issues as much as they have clarified them."

Unclassified publications can be used to focus debate among US Government agencies--or among the US and its allies--in a way that classified publications cannot. According to an article, "CIA Publication of Unclassified Reports," prepared as a team research project by four members of CIA's Senior Seminar 16 and published in the March 1980 issue of Contra, "Unclassified publications have become increasingly important when US, European, and Japanese national policies must be orchestrated to deal with shared problems or to negotiate with the Communist countries, OPEC, or the non-OPEC LDCs. Striking examples of the

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need for continuing or greater unclassified Agency publication can be found in such areas as meeting global food needs or spurring economic development in the Third World."

It increases the feedback/flow of information from the business and academic communities. Dissemination of building block studies has gained respect for OER in the US economic and energy policy communities; D/OER believes the release of such studies is critical to OER's reputation. He cites "massive amounts" of feedback on such studies as the Soviet oil and world energy outlook papers.

Through NFAC's Coordinator for Academic Relations and the production offices, unclassified publications are sent to academics throughout the country. According to the Academic Coordinator, letters from recipients--who include college presidents, academic deans, and heads of departments--indicate that there has been significant improvement in their relationship with the Agency through this program.

Public release of the dollar cost comparison of US and Soviet defense activities by the Office of Strategic Research is reported to have fostered better communications between OSR and the academic world. As a byproduct, academic criticism has forced OSR to take a harder look at its methodology and to sharpen its analysis.

Although some of the feedback is substantive and critical, much of it is general and laudatory ("good work--keep it coming"), according to several sources who are in line to receive feedback.* But most feedback pertains to the more analytic--and often more controversial--releases. For the bulk of the unclassified releases, there does not appear to be much feedback.

Public dissemination of unclassified reports enhances recruitment. According to this argument, students who have been exposed to NFAC research through unclassified reports are likely to view the CIA as a good place to work; furthermore, faculty members who are familiar with CIA reports are inclined to recommend the CIA to students who are potential recruits. The public release program also helps potential recruits understand the nature of the work they would do at CIA. No-one interviewed challenged this notion.

The Congress likes the unclassified release program. It is a "definite plus" for the Agency on Capitol Hill, according to the Office of Legislative Counsel. Unclassified reports can be freely passed around and discussed without fear of revealing

*The Office of Public Affairs, the Coordinator for Academic Relations, the Office of Legislative Counsel, the CIA Librarian (who is the focal point for communications with DOCEX and NTIS), and the Director of Central Reference.

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sensitive information and, unlike classified documents, they present no storage problems.

Unclassified reports also are a convenience for other government policymakers, who find them easier to handle than classified reports.

Distribution of unclassified publications has sometimes contributed to the development of [redacted] 25X1
source relationships. In several instances, unclassified publications reportedly made clear [redacted] the kinds of analysis to which their reporting contributed, resulting in enhanced motivation on their part. They are also reported to have served as "icebreakers" with academics who initially suspect [redacted] motives and have reservations about NFAC's analytical capabilities. 25X1

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Arguments Against

"Some of the analytic releases make me uneasy; we need to be more selective about what we disseminate publicly." NFAC Senior Manager

Arguments against the public dissemination of unclassified research are most often aimed at analytical releases rather than factual compilations. The thrust of these arguments is the risk to the CIA and to US foreign policy involved in public release--a risk that opponents of public release see as needless. Proponents of unclassified release acknowledge the risks, but believe that on balance the benefits outweigh the potential costs.

Release of unclassified publications represents a threat to intelligence sources and methods. Although the production

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offices try to ensure that their sources and methods are not revealed in unclassified publications, their basic analytic approaches are generally quite clear. Sources whose information is unclassified but who wish their CIA connection to remain confidential worry that they are exposed by the release of unclassified studies. As the Contra article noted, "The willingness of sources to share their information and analyses with CIA is a direct function of the degree to which they are confident that CIA will not place this information in the public domain....it would be naive to expect that their attitude is not negatively affected by the Agency's current policy."

It has been alleged that some [redacted] sources may have become less cooperative because of public release of unclassified information. OER disagrees, believing that there has been no significant loss beyond that resulting from a general concern about CIA's ability to keep secrets. But the release of unclassified reports, coupled with real security leaks, FOIA releases, and other challenges to security classification, must have a cumulative effect on the perceptions of sources.

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Release of unclassified publications alerts opponents of the US. The Senior Review Panel, in its study of NFAC production, posed the following questions: "Is it desirable for the CIA to tip its hand in public on how it has come out on certain analytical tasks concerning foreign countries, and should it make its work freely available even to unfriendly intelligence services abroad?"

Unclassified publications of an analytic nature provide an indication of US interest in an issue, as well as revealing the terms of reference within which the US is dealing with it. Providing such publications to foreign governments makes it possible for them to anticipate, and thus frustrate, US policy moves. In the case of friendly governments, it might also contribute to productive dialogue.

Soviet and Cuban open-source information has been cut back as a result of such information being published in CIA unclassified reports. The amount of openly available data on the Soviet and Cuban economies has substantially declined in the last few years. Proponents of public release argue that this is because those governments do not want to publicize the poor performance of their economies; however, the publicity generated in the Western press by CIA publication of Soviet and Cuban economic statistics probably contributed to the decision of those Governments to restrict access to such information in the future. According to a 1979 OER report, "CIA's future policy with respect to publishing unclassified analyses of Soviet economic problems probably will have some effect in tailoring Soviet policy with respect to releasing economic data--it will not be the cause of the Soviet policy." The report recommended that internal review of candidate unclassified publications should explicitly consider whether their release might cause

withholding of published material by foreign countries.

Recently the USSR has also decided to restrict the release of demographic data. According to OER's International Economic and Energy Weekly, the USSR "may be concerned about Western attempts to study Soviet demographic changes."

"CIA risks diminishing the credibility of all of its products by placing in the public domain those it is least able to defend without compromising sources and methods"--Contra. In some cases, NFAC cannot array all the evidence or analysis supporting a judgment or conclusion in an unclassified report because some is sensitive information whose release would jeopardize sources or methods. Thus, criticism of CIA's judgments must go unanswered and public confidence in the Agency is undermined.

On this point, the Director of OER notes that release of unclassified research is a management judgment; a study whose conclusions cannot be publicly justified will not be released. Sanitized versions of classified publications, however, have sometimes raised questions for which no answers were provided.

CIA's unclassified public release program is a misallocation of resources. The program is alleged to divert resources from other, more important, activities. The Senior Review Panel raised a similar but more basic issue: "Given the resource constraints affecting OER (and more broadly NFAC and CIA as a whole), does the marginal value of unclassified publications justify their marginal cost, even though they almost surely constitute a convenient source of information for some consumers?"

Proponents of public release argue that unclassified publications would be produced for government consumers whether or not the publications are released to the public; the Agency is simply sharing its unclassified research with the public. In addition, the program is not very costly, either in terms of time or money.

Objectivity can be difficult to maintain once the CIA has taken a position publicly. "When a controversial assessment is made public, and is publicly criticized, pressure is created to look for evidence that corroborates our assessment. The more original the assessment and the greater the likely controversy and criticism, the greater the stake for CIA's credibility and reputation."--D/OER

Proponents of public release suggest that intellectual honesty keeps NFAC analysis pure. A way of avoiding at least part of the problem, according to D/OER, is not to get out on a limb by making flat predictions. "Any forward looking assessment in an unclassified CIA publication should be drafted very cautiously indeed, complete with appropriate caveats."

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The CIA should not become publicly embroiled in policy debates on politically sensitive issues. The release of unclassified CIA papers on controversial political issues risks accusations of political motivation. Some observers will think that release is timed to support Administration policy, others that it is an attempt to derail that policy. OER's 1977 study of the world energy situation was accused of providing the justification for President Carter's "moral equivalent of war."

In some cases, unclassified CIA research has been used by both sides of a policy debate. An example of this was the debate in Congress that followed the publication of an unclassified report on a Soviet motor vehicle plant in the mid-1960s. The debate centered on whether US equipment being used to build the plant would enhance the USSR's military potential; the CIA paper was used by both sides.

Contra framed the political issue this way: "Voluntary unclassified publication changes the Agency from disinterested informer to vested player....Thus CIA must expect others to bargain for its support for a particular outcome, and it must also expect possible retaliation by those whose positions it has not supported. In sum, unclassified CIA publications obviate the very reason CIA was created--independent analysis."

Release of unclassified publications on sensitive subjects can create controversy within the Executive Branch and thus complicate Presidential decision-making. According to a recent article by Robert Gates in Studies in Intelligence, "The White House's general unease with unclassified CIA analysis is rooted in this dislike for what is regarded as needless controversy....Our own citizens, not to mention foreign readers, cannot be expected to assume that a CIA publication does not reflect an official US Government view--and this confusion is of concern to the White House and often a public relations and policy headache."

Release of unclassified CIA publications provides grist for our media critics, when there is too much publicity about the Agency already. And the larger the program of public release, the more the media has to criticize. Proponents of release acknowledge this risk but believe that the Agency is more appreciated when the public knows something about its work.

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Conclusions

Whether to permit public release of unclassified NFAC research is not a clear-cut issue; there are persuasive arguments on both sides. And there are many equities involved. While more extensive release does not seem wise or warranted, a decision to discontinue or severely limit the program might affect OER's ability to do business outside the Intelligence Community. It might also cause an outcry--probably brief--from members of the academic, business and media communities whose appetite for NFAC research has been nurtured over the past several years.

A decision to cut back on the number of analytic assessments released would have few foreseeable negative consequences.

If a decision were made to discontinue public release but to continue to produce unclassified publications for consumers in the Executive Branch and elsewhere in the government, there would remain the problem of public access through release programs of other agencies and through the Freedom of Information Act.

If the concern about public release is primarily its cost (rather than risks to the Agency or to US foreign policy), NFAC could negotiate with the commercial distributors of NFAC reports to discontinue bulk release through those channels.* Such a step would save the expense of between 650 and 1,000 additional copies of each unclassified publication. But the savings--some additional printing expense--would not be great, since the publications would still need to be produced for government use. Distribution costs to the government are already recovered to some extent through public sale of the documents by the commercial distributors. Further savings could be effected by discontinuing the business distribution through the Department of Commerce and by limiting the number of copies the production offices and the NFAC Coordinator for Academic Relations can send out to private interests and academia. But limiting rather than discontinuing public release might lead to charges of favoritism by those who were deprived of easy access.

If the real issue is substantive--that is, the potential risks to the CIA and the US through public access to NFAC research--the answer may be to classify such research as appropriate under the laws designed to protect national security information. Every analytic release has a potential foreign policy effect. (The 1977 OER study on Soviet oil, for example, is alleged to have helped spur the Kremlin to take major steps to alleviate the oil squeeze. Some policymakers see this as helpful to US interests; others see it as harmful.) It is already the

*The recent memo from the President on eliminating wasteful spending on superfluous pamphlets and periodicals, while not directly applicable, is instructive in revealing Administration concerns.

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responsibility of the production offices, in the first instance, to review proposed unclassified publications for protection of intelligence sources and methods and for potential foreign policy sensitivity; it may be enough to re-emphasize this responsibility or define it more stringently. DD/NFAC, who must approve all releases, may also wish to reconsider the criteria for public release.

Perhaps the most ticklish question attending public release is whether to push the CIA into the public eye on sensitive political issues like world energy supply. There is real danger to the credibility of the Agency if it is seen as embroiled in policy debate and political controversy. Considerable care should go into any decision to release a report that puts the Agency in that position, and the reasons for doing so should be compelling, even if--perhaps particularly if--the decision is made at the Presidential level.

Options and Recommendations

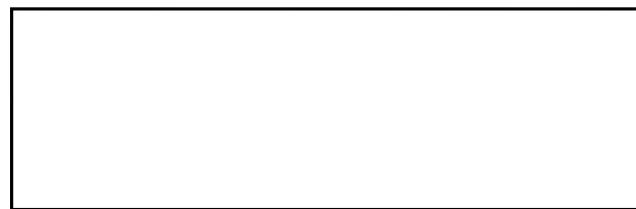
The issue of public release affects the Agency as a whole--not just NFAC--and probably should be considered in a broader context than that addressed in this study. This might be an appropriate issue for ExCom consideration. Nevertheless, from an NFAC perspective some options for dealing with the issue present themselves:

- A. Discontinue all public release of NFAC unclassified publications. The problems attending this option, absent tighter FOIA controls, are outlined above.
- B. Limit public release by cutting back on bulk distribution to commercial outlets and by pruning CIA's external non-governmental dissemination lists. Implementation of this option risks charges of favoritism and has the same FOIA implications as Option A. Both Option A and Option B save some money (which would likely be absorbed in FOIA expenses if demand were diverted to that channel).
- C. Continue to release statistical/factual compendiums and some building block research; cut back on the release of analytical/judgmental assessments by applying stricter criteria than in the past.
- D. Continue present policy with regard to public release.

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On balance, Option C seems to offer the most advantages with the fewest disadvantages. It allows OER and others to keep a line of communication open to the economic, energy, and other policy communities; it reduces--by the application of stricter standards--the risks of revealing damaging information or of becoming entangled in political debate; and it allows release of such reports as would clearly support US Government and CIA objectives.



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